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RHEE MAY DISASSOCIATE SOUTH KOREA FROM TRUCE NEGOTIATIONS

Ambassador Briggs reports that President Rhee's opposition to the latest UN Command proposals at Panmunjom is so intense that he may publicly declare South Korea not bound by them. He also thinks that Rhee might offer an alternative solution based on the simultaneous withdrawal of all foreign forces, thus leaving "Koreans to settle Korean problems."

There is also a real danger that Rhee may take some unilateral action to release the anti-Communist Korean POW's, according to Briggs. He states that both the president and Foreign Minister Pyun take the greatest exception to turning the Koreans over to the neutral commission, terming this "forced repatriation in disguise." Faced with more than a half year of additional imprisonment and three months of exposure to "professional Communist intimidators and brain washers," Pyun believes that a large number of them would switch to the Communist side.

Comment: In a conversation with Briggs on 25 May, Rhee refused to give assurances of future cooperation with the UN in regard to the armistice in return for American military assistance and political support for a united Korea. Rhee's highly emotional attitude on the armistice makes his future actions unpredictable. While he is likely to continue his political opposition to the armistice, he will probably avoid extreme military measures at this time.

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